



Social Media and Media Relations Policy

Originally Prepared By: Marketing & Communications Officer	Motion #: RES-60-2024
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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Town of Torbay with respect to interacting with news media representatives, and the content of materials being published under the Town of Torbay’s authorized social media platforms and website. It will also assist the media by clarifying the level of service they can expect regarding access to officers, provision of information, and responses to inquiries. The policy deals with the day-to-day relationships between Council and Town of Torbay staff in dealing with the media in all interactive scenarios.

2.0 Policy Statement | Media Relations

It is the policy of the Town of Torbay to foster strong, professional relationships with journalists and respond to news media questions or inquiries effectively, accurately, and quickly in an effort to inform its internal and external stakeholders, residents, businesses, and visitors.

Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the Town of Torbay and should be responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible. Every reasonable effort should be made to meet media deadlines and to ensure that all information released is accurate.

The Marketing Coordinator, in conjunction with the Chief Administrative Officer, is responsible for coordinating media relations under the direction of Council. To ensure accuracy and proper communication of necessary information is given, the Marketing Coordinator must be informed of all inquiries from the news media.

Unless otherwise authorized, the Town’s spokespersons are:

- Mayor and Town Council Members
- Chief Administrative Officer



Town Spokesperson

The Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer and Marketing Coordinator are responsible for determination of a spokesperson for media inquiries as per the guidelines of the policy.

Unless otherwise authorized, the Town of Torbay's spokespersons are:

- The Mayor is the primary spokesperson for matters pertaining to Town policy, organizational performance and official / Town Council announcements for the Town of Torbay.
- Committee Chairs or their designates are the spokespersons for matters related to their respective Committees.
- Based on the direction of Mayor and Council, the Chief Administrative Officer may be designated as the chief spokesperson for operational and technical matters pertaining to the Town of Torbay. The Chief Administrative Officer may authorize members of the Senior Management team and other designated staff to represent the organization in the media as required, based on Mayor and Council direction and consultation with the Marketing Coordinator.

Official Spokesperson Policy for Members of Council

The Mayor and/or Committee Chair is the authorized spokesperson for any official Council announcements. In situations where the media contacts a member of Council directly, the member of Council shall advise the Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer and Marketing Coordinator prior to speaking to the media.

The following are guiding principles related to Official Town spokesperson:

- The Mayor is the authorized spokesperson for official Town Council Announcements, Town Policy and organizational performance for the Town of Torbay. The Mayor may designate other members of Council to respond as required. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor is the authorized spokesperson.
- The Mayor and members of Council have been elected to represent the Town and are free to speak to the media on any subject. While the Mayor and members of Council have the right to express personal opinions on any issue, they must state that they are expressing their own opinion on the matter at hand and that comments they are making do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Council and the Town of Torbay employees.



Official Spokesperson Policy for Town Employees

All Town employees should notify the Chief Administrative Officer and the Marketing Coordinator when approached by the media for an interview so that a coordinated response can be prepared. Only Town employees assigned as designated spokesperson can comment on Town business, policy, decisions, programs or activities. Contractors, service providers or suppliers engaged by Council must refer all media inquiries relating to Council to the Marketing Coordinator, who in turn is responsible for notifying the Chief Administrative Officer.

3.0 Responding to Media Inquiries

In situations where the media contacts Town staff requesting a media interview the request should be immediately forwarded to the Marketing Coordinator. Staff should obtain the reporter's name, phone number, topic of the story and the deadline for replying to the inquiry and email this information to the Marketing Coordinator for coordination.

Upon receiving notification of the media inquiry, the Marketing Coordinator will notify the Chief Administrative Officer, the Mayor and Council members on the respective Committee advising them on the nature of the inquiry and request that they designate a spokesperson to respond to the inquiry. Concurrently, the Marketing Coordinator will also request the respective Director of which the inquiry pertains to provide some background information so briefing notes for the designated spokesperson on the subject matter can be made. Upon receiving a copy of the briefing note the designated spokesperson will respond to the appropriate media.

Litigation, Personnel, Private Interests

Generally, the business conducted by the Town of Torbay is public, and therefore is public information. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, matters involving a significant exposure to litigation and certain personnel-related information are an exception and should be directed to both the Marketing Coordinator and Chief Administrative Officer. The Town of Torbay also reserves the right to withhold confidential information concerning commercial transactions (e.g. purchase and sale of land and property). This applies to Council's own commercial interests and to the various parties involved in individual business transactions.

The Town of Torbay complies with all applicable federal and provincial laws relating to Access to Information including the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Legislation and the Municipalities Act.

Emergency Situations

In the case of a fire, water main break, boil water advisory or any other emergency situation involving public safety issues, the Marketing Coordinator, Chief Administrative Officer,



Directors or a senior administrative staff member are authorized to make statements to the media pertaining to the nature of the emergency and what action is being undertaken to address the situation.

During a disaster or major emergency, the Marketing Coordinator in conjunction with the Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Human Resources will coordinate the preparation and dissemination of emergency public information. A public service announcement regarding road closures, water shut-offs, or other planned disruption in municipal services can be issued through the Department initiating the activity to the Marketing Coordinator for the purpose of immediate publication.

Town Initiated Releases

An employee or a department that seeks to publicize a program, event, or achievement should contact the Marketing Coordinator and provide documentation on the event so that this information can be disseminated to members of Council and senior staff prior to being released to the media or public.

All media releases (with the exception of water outages) from the Town of Torbay are to be issued through the Marketing Coordinator. Media releases are to be circulated to members of Council and senior staff prior to being released to the media.

The Town of Torbay's Marketing Coordinator shall be the identified as the Media Contact person for the media releases issued on behalf of Council.

Media Releases during Election Campaign

During pending election campaigns, the following provisions will be made to the Social Media and Media Relations Policy.

- The Mayor and Councillors will not be quoted in any issued media releases, interview or inquiries unless it is during an emergency situation.
- The Chief Administrative Officer or designate will be the only spokesperson quoted in media releases.
- Media release will be kept to an absolute minimum during the election period. The election campaign period as per the provisions outlined in the Elections Act:
 - a. Starts on the last day on which nominations for the election can be received: and,
 - b. Ends at 8 p.m. on election day.



4.0 Social Media Use

The Town of Torbay routinely uses online social media accounts (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, and YouTube) and the website to communicate Town initiatives and to inform residents of events, activities and municipal programs and services offered by the organization.

The Town’s social media accounts and other electronic news platforms are not to be used for political forums, or promoting non-affiliated and non-partnering groups or organizations. Only information communicated by the Town’s authorized social media platforms and website is considered official Town communication. Social media profiles and websites representing members of Council do not represent official media platforms on behalf of the Town of Torbay.

Town of Torbay employees and council are strongly discouraged from engaging and participating in any forums or social media platforms referring to the daily operations, staff and elected officials of the Town of Torbay.

5.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, news media refers to any print, radio, television or online media outlet.

6.0 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or as deemed necessary. All changes shall be subject to final approval of Council.

Approval

Chief Administrative Officer: 

Date: March 26/2025